

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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P 131709Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1689

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 PARIS 10807

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR FR CG

SUBJ: GISCARD'S PRESS CONFERENCE: ZAIRE

REF: PARIS 10661

THERE FOLLOWS AN EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF THE FULL TEXT
(QUESTIONS ABBREVIATED) OF GISCARD'S COMMENTS ON ZAIRE
MADE DURING HIS APRIL 12 PRESS CONFERENCE AS
CARRIED IN THE FIGARO OF APRIL 13.

"QUESTION: WHY FRENCH AID TO ZAIRE?

"ANSWER: WHY DID FRANCE INTERVENE IN ZAIRE? IT
INTERVENED BECAUSE IT WAS ASKED TO DO SO. IN FACT,
ZAIRE, WHICH IS A GREAT AFRICAN STATE WITH WHICH WE HAVE
BONDS OF COOPERATION, SAW ITS SECURITY THREATENED
BY ELEMENTS COMING FROM THE EXTERIOR AND ZAIRE APPEALED
TO AFRICAN SOLIDARITY.

"IT ADDRESSED ITSELF TO THE OAU AND ASKED AFRICAN
STATES TO TESTIFY TO THEIR SOLIDARITY. A CERTAIN
NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY, NOTABLY
MOROCCO. AND MOROCCO PROPOSED TO ZAIRE TO SEND A
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CERTAIN NUMBER OF MILITARY ELEMENTS.

"ZAIRE AND MOROCCO DID NOT DISPOSE OF SUFFICIENT
MEANS OF RAPID TRANSPORT TO REALIZE THIS OPERATION AND
THEY THUS JOINTLY APPROACHED FRANCE. AND IT IS THEN
THAT WE TOOK THE DECISION -- NOT IMPROVISED AS HAS BEEN
WRITTEN -- BUT CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT AND DECIDED TO
RESPOND FAVORABLY TO THAT REQUEST.

"FRENCH ACTION THEREFORE CONSISTS OF A REPLY TO AN AFRICAN REQUEST TO ASSURE THIS TRANSPORT OF A CERTAIN NUMBER OF MILITARY ELEMENTS FROM MOROCCO TO ZAIRE. I IMMEDIATELY UNDERLINE THAT THE TRANSPORT CARRIED OUT BY FRENCH PLANES WAS EXCLUSIVELY FOR MATERIEL. IT THUS IS NOT AN OPERATION OF WAR, OF FIGHTING, THERE ARE NO FRENCHMEN WHO ARE OR WILL BE ENGAGED IN ZAIRE. IT IS AN OPERATION OF ASSISTANCE, OF COOPERATION FOR TRANSPORT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ZAIRE. YOU WILL ASK ME WHY?

"IN DOING SO, WE WISHED TO GIVE TWO SIGNALS. A SIGNAL OF SECURITY AND A SIGNAL OF SOLIDARITY.

"FIRST, A SIGNAL OF SECURITY. I DO NOT WISH THAT AFRICAN STATES, FRIENDS OF FRANCE, WHEN THEY ARE WITHIN THEIR RIGHTS AND WHEN THEIR SECURITY IS THREATENED, TO FEEL ABANDONED. THEY WILL NOT BE ABANDONED.

"AS FOR THE SIGNAL OF SOLIDARITY, WE ARE SHOWING THAT A STRONG SOLIDARITY EXISTS BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA. EUROPE CAN NOT BE INDIFFERENT TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN AFRICA. THAT WOULD CONSTITUTE THE WORST KIND OF INSOUCIANCE ON EUROPE'S PART. AND WE WANTED ON THIS OCCASION TO GIVE A SIGNAL OF SOLIDARITY BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA.

"Q: IS IT A QUESTION OF RIOTING OR OF INSURRECTION?

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"A: FIRST, A VERY IMPORTANT POINT. IT IS NOT AN INSURRECTION. WE KNOW ZAIRE, I KNOW ZAIRE; THE GREAT CITIES OF ZAIRE, THAT IS KINSHASA OR LUBUMBASHI, DID NOT WITNESS AN UPRISING. THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISORDERS. IT IS ELEMENTS COMING FROM THE EXTERIOR WHO ENTERED ZAIRIAN TERRITORY.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1690

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"I AM GOING TO SHOW YOU ON THIS MAP WHERE THESE EVENTS ARE HAPPENING. HERE IS ZAIRE IN THE CENTER OF AFRICA. SOME FACTS. IT IS, AFTER FRANCE, THE MOST HEAVILY POPULATED FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRY (25 MILLION INHABITANTS) AND IT IS, BEFORE FRANCE, THE LARGEST FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. IT IS A COUNTRY WHICH HAS CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES. THE RIVER CONGO IS A RIVER WHOSE EQUIPMENT, IF IT WERE TO BE REALIZED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY, WOULD REPRESENT THE EQUIVALENT OF 40 NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. THIS TO SHOW YOU THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A COUNTRY.

"THE INFILTRATION HAPPENED IN THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY, STARTING FROM NEIGHBORING TERRITORY. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THEY ARE KATANGAN GENDARMES WHO ARE RETURNING HOME. THESE KATANGAN GENDARMES LEFT ZAIRE 12 YEARS AGO. THEY THUS HAVE AGED AND I DO NOT THINK THAT THEY ARE RETURNING TO THE COUNTRY WITH THE ARMS THAT THEY WOULD HAVE CARRIED 12 YEARS AGO. THEY ARE THEN ARMED, EQUIPPED MEN WHO ENTERED ZAIRE. THEY ADVANCED IN THE DIRECTION OF AN IMPORTANT CITY, KOLWEZI, WHICH IS A UNCLASSIFIED

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CITY OF 150,000 INHABITANTS WHOSE FALL WAS FORESEEN, YOU RECALL, ABOUT 10 DAYS AGO. THESE ARE OPERATIONS TAKING PLACE ON A TERRAIN WHICH IS A KIND OF CLOSED SAVANNAH, WHICH TAKES PLACE PRINCIPALLY AT NIGHT. IT IS NOT EXACTLY A WAR WITH LARGE FIGHTING MILITARY UNITS, IT IS RATHER AN INFILTRATION BUT ALL THE SAME IT IS AN INFILTRATION OF GREAT IMPORTANCE BECAUSE IT THREATENS THE SECURITY OF A CITY OF 150,000 INHABITANTS.

"FOR THE MOMENT, THE SITUATION APPEARS STABILIZED

ON THE TERRAIN. CONCERNING THE POLITICAL SITUATION, I REMIND YOU THAT THERE ARE NO TROUBLES, THAT IT IS NOT AN INSURRECTION IN ZAIRE, THAT IT IS ELEMENTS COMING FROM THE EXTERIOR WHICH POSED THIS PROBLEM OF SECURITY. LET ME MAKE A VERY IMPORTANT POINT. WE HAVE NO JUDGMENT TO MAKE ON AFRICAN REGIMES. IT IS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS. WE HAVE LEFT THE COLONIAL PERIOD AND IT IS NOT WE WHO GOVERN AFRICA. WE WORK WITH GOVERNMENTS, THESE GOVERNMENTS REPRESENTING COUNTRIES. THEY HAVE THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

"Q: WERE THE INVADERS NOT WELL RECEIVED BY THE POPULATION?

"A: THE WELCOME BY THE POPULATION? WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT IT AND THE STATEMENTS TOWHICH YOU REFER ARE STATEMENTS WHICH COME PRECISELY FROM THOSE WHO ARE CARRYING ON THESE INFILTRATIONS.

"NATURALLY WHEN ONE ENTERS A COUNTRY, ONE ALWAYS SAYS THAT HE IS WELCOMED BY THE POPULATION. MOREOVER, SINCE ONE IS GENERALLY ARMED, THIS IS THE GENERAL IMPRESSION THAT THEY GIVE. THUS IT IS DIFFICULT AND, IN ANY CASE, I HAVE NO DATA ON WHICH TO VERIFY THIS INFORMATION. THE LAST POINT, THE ROLE OF THE FRENCH. THERE ARE NO FRENCHMEN FIGHTING IN ZAIRE. AND THERE WILL BE NO UNCLASSIFIED

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FRENCHMEN WHO WILL FIGHT IN ZAIRE. THE PRESS HAS CITED THE CASE OF A FRENCH OFFICER WHO WAS IN ZAIRE, IN FACT. WE CAN STATE THAT HE RETURNED TO PARIS THIS AFTERNOON. WE HAVE HAD FOR THREE YEARS AN AGREEMENT WHICH WAS SIGNED BEFORE I BECAME PRESIDENT, AN AGREEMENT OF MILITARY COOPERATION WITH ZAIRE, AS WE HAVE AGREEMENTS WITH A NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES. AND THUS IN GENERAL THERE ARE A FEW DOZEN FRENCH SOLDIERS IN ZAIRE. I REPEAT A FEW DOZEN SINCE WE HAVE NEVER HAD A HUNDRED, WHO ARE OFFICERS AND NONCOMS WHO HAVE THE SPECIFIED DUTIES OF TEACHING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, NOTABLY FOR AIRCRAFT WHICH WE HAVE FURNISHED THAT STATE.

"Q: BECAUSE OF THE FRANCO-MOROCCAN ACTION, ARE NOT INTERVENTIONS BY OTHERS ON THE REBEL SIDE TO BE FEARED?

"A: THERE IS NO FRANCO-MOROCCAN ACTION. THERE IS AN ACTION OF MOROCCO AND ZAIRE FOR WHICH FRANCE PROVIDED MEANS OF TRANSPORT FOR A FIXED PERIOD -- BECAUSE YOU DID NOT ASK ME THAT -- BUT I CAN INFORM YOU THAT OUR TRANSPORT WILL END AT THE END OF THIS WEEK. OUR PLANES WILL RETURN TO THEIR BASE IN FRANCE IN

ORLEANS. THAT IS A DEFENSIVE ACTION WITHIN A STATE.

"THE SITUATION WOULD BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT IF FRANCE
OR MOREOVER SOME OTHER COUNTRY PROVIDED ASSISTANCE FOR

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1691

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AN OFFENSIVE ACTION CROSSING THE BORDERS OF ANOTHER
STATE. BUT HERE THERE IS A STATE WHICH IS AT HOME,
WITHIN ITS OWN BORDERS, AND WHOSE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT
RECOGNIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BELONGS TO THE
UN AND OAU, ASKS ITS AFRICAN PARTNERS FOR ASSISTANCE.
THAT CAN NOT BE THE JUSTIFICATION FOR MAKING OF THESE
EXTERIOR DISORDERS AN INVASION IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS
COUNTRY.

"Q: IS THE USSR GAINING A FOOTHOLD ON THE CONTINENT
BECAUSE OF ITS SETBACKS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

"A: NO. I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS A CORRELATION
BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION'S AFRICAN POLICY AND EVENTS IN
THE NEAR EAST. I THINK SOVIET AFRICAN POLICY HAS
EXISTED FOR A LONG TIME, THAT IT HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF
MOREOVER IN THE PAST IN A CERTAIN NUMBER OF STATES. AND
IF AT THE PRESENT MOMENT IT MANIFESTS ITSELF IT IS
BECAUSE OF THE VERY TROUBLED SITUATION IN AFRICA AND OF
THE SOVIET ATTITUDE CONSISTING OF MANIFESTING ITS
PRESENCE WHERE THERE IS A TROUBLED SITUATION AND I DO

NOT THINK THAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS AT THE ORIGIN OF THIS
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SOVIET ACTION.

"BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU MY PROFOUND
SENTIMENTS FOR AFRICA. AFRICA IS A CONTINENT WHICH I
KNOW WELL AND WHICH EUROPE OUGHT TO CONSIDER AS A BROTHER
CONTINENT. AT THE MOMENT, THE AFRICANS DO NOT AT ALL
WISH TO BE SUBJECTED TO CONQUERING IDEOLOGIES. THAT IS
NOT THE AIM OF AFRICA. AFRICA ASPIRES TO ITS
DEVELOPMENT, TO A PEACEFUL SITUATION, AND ITS GREATEST
AMBITION WOULD BE THAT AFRICA BE LEFT TO THE AFRICANS.
MOREOVER, EACH TIME THAT IT CAN, THROUGH ITS OWN
PROCEDURES, IT WILL FORCE EXTERIOR POLITICAL INFLUENCES
TO WITHDRAW. IT HAS ALREADY DONE SO SEVERAL TIMES,
IT WILL DO SO AGAIN.

"AND THUS THE ATTITUDE OF FRANCE, IN THE CASE OF
ZAIRE, WILL NOT BE AT ALL AN ATTITUDE OF A COLONIAL TYPE
TENDING TO DICTATE I KNOW NOT WHAT POLICY TO AFRICA,
BUT RATHER, A POLITICAL AID TO AFRICA TO FINALLY BE
MASTER OF ITS PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY.

"Q: AND WHAT ABOUT CUBA?

"A: FIRST, THAT IS DIFFERENT. CUBA AND THE SOVIET
UNION HAVE NOT THE SAME RESPONSIBILITY. WHAT IS CERTAIN,
ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS ON THE GROUND, IS THAT THE
ELEMENTS INFILTRATING INTO ZAIRE WERE ELEMENTS RECENTLY
TRAINED. THEY WERE NOT KATANGAN GENDARMES RETURNING
AFTER 12 YEARS TO THEIR COUNTRY, WITH THEIR OLD ARMS,
THEY ARE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE UNDERGONE TRAINING IN
REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE. THAT IS WHY THEY OPERATE AT
NIGHT, IN LITTLE GROUPS OF 10 OR 20 WITH A PROVEN
TECHNIQUE, AND THEY THUS ARE ELEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN
TRAINED BY OTHERS. THAT IS COMPLETELY CLEAR. AND WHO
ARE THE OTHERS WHO TRAINED THEM? I HAVE NO
INFORMATION ON THAT SUBJECT.
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"Q: SHOULD EXCESSIVE ENGAGEMENT BE FEARED?

"A: NO. FIRST, A VERY IMPORTANT THING SHOULD BE
FRANCE DOES NOT ACT FOR OTHERS. AND VERY OFTEN IN OUR

NATIONAL POLITICAL DEBATES, THE WISH IS EXPRESSED THAT FRANCE HAVE AN INDEPENDENT POLICY. AND HERE IS ONE* IN THIS CASE, WE ASKED THE AUTHORIZATION OR APPROBATION OF NO ONE. I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE US PASSED THROUGH PARIS LAST SATURDAY, THAT WE SPOKE IN GENERAL TERMS OF THE SITUATION IN AFRICA, BUT THAT I DID NOT INFORM HIM OF OUR INTENTION, WHICH HOWEVER WE WERE PREPARING AT THAT TIME, EVENTUALLY TO RESPOND TO THE REQUEST MADE TO US. THUS, IT IS AN INDEPENDENT POLICY OF FRANCE.

"I OUGHT TO SAY THAT I AM NOT IN ACCORD, EITHER, WITH THE DECLARATIONS, SUCH AS THEY HAVE BEEN REPORTED, OF THE US REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN. THUS A PARALLEL SHOULD NOT BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THAT SITUATION AND OTHER SITUATIONS, A PARALLEL WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETELY ABSURD, I MEAN TO SAY A PARALLEL WITH VIETNAM. FRANCE HAS NO INTENTION OF SENDING COMBATANTS TO AFRICA FOR A WAR OF THE VIETNAM TYPE. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF IT. AND IN ANY CASE, MOREOVER, THE AFRICANS WOULD NOT ASK IT

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1692

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OF US. IN THIS AFFAIR WE ARE ACTING, AS I SAID AT THE BEGINNING, AT THE REQUEST OF THE AFRICANS THEMSELVES AND WITHIN THE LIMITS OF AFRICAN REQUESTS.

"NATURALLY THERE ARE THOSE WHO ALWAYS WISH THAT

FRANCE BE CONDEMNED TO POWERLESSNESS AND WHO SAY EITHER
'THE AMERICANS ARE NOT ACTING, WHY ARE YOU ACTING IN
THEIR PLACE?' OR RATHER, 'THE AMERICANS ARE ACTING, YOU
ARE ACTING AT THEIR ORDERS.' WELL, NO* FRANCE IS
ACTING ON ITS OWN IN THE EXERCISE OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES
AND I MIGHT SAY WITH A PREOCCUPATION FOR ITS OWN
NATIONAL CONSCIENCE.

"FOR AFRICA IS VERY NEAR. AFRICA IS A CONTINENT
FROM WHICH TRADITIONALLY COME A CERTAIN NUMBER OF OUR
RESOURCES, A CERTAIN NUMBER OF OUR RAW MATERIALS, WITH
WHICH WE HAVE VERY CLOSE BONDS. AND AFRICA, EVEN IF
FOR MANY FRENCHMEN IT IS FAR AWAY, IS THE NEIGHBORING
CONTINENT TO OURS. WHICH MEANS THAT A CHANGE OF THE
POLITICAL SITUATION IN AFRICA, A GENERAL SITUATION OF
INSECURITY, OF SUBVERSION IN AFRICA, WOULD HAVE
CONSEQUENCES FOR FRANCE AND FOR EUROPE. THAT IS WHY
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FRANCE WISHED, AS I JUST SAID, TO SEND A SIGNAL. AND
FOR MY PART, I PREFER THAT IT SEND THIS SIGNAL WITHOUT
THE AGREEMENT OF THE US. BECAUSE IT IS THE OCCASION
TO DEMONSTRATE, FOR ONCE, THAT THERE ARE SOME SITUATIONS
AND PROBLEMS TOWARDS WHICH EUROPE SHOULD REACT BY ITSELF.
AND EUROPE MANIFESTED ITSELF THROUGH THE INTERMEDIARY OF
FRANCE. WE NATURALLY INFORMED OUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS IN
ADVANCE AND WE SHALL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE
SITUATION WITH THEM BUT I FEEL THE FACT THAT FRANCE IS
EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AFRICAN PROBLEM ON
BEHALF OF EUROPE, AND NOT BY FRANCE OUTSIDE OF EUROPE,
IS IN ITSELF A SIGN OF AN INDEPENDENT AND RESPONSIBLE
POLICY.

"Q: WOULD YOU WISH FOR CONSULTATIONS AMONG FRENCH
POLITICAL PARTIES?

"A: I WOULD HOPE THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD MAKE IT
POSSIBLE AND I WOULD SAY, FOR MY PART, THAT I WOULD BE
PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE. WHY DID I NOT DO SO? IT IS
BECAUSE THEY TOOK THE OPPOSITE INITIATIVE. BEFORE EVEN
HAVING EXPLAINED THE FRENCH POINT OF VIEW, I RECEIVED A
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNIST GROUP, A
LETTER IN WHICH HE CRITICIZES, AS YOU KNOW, THE ACTION
OF FRANCE. AS I KNOW M. BALLANGER WELL, I AM SURPRISED
THAT HE CRITICIZED THE FRENCH ACTION EVEN BEFORE HAVING
CONSULTED THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR FRENCH POLICY. HE
COULD SEE THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE
MINISTER OF DEFENSE, AND EVEN, IF HE WISHED TO, THE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, WHO IN FACT, WOULD HAVE
EXPLAINED TO HIM, AS TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE GROUPS OF

THE MAJORITY, ALL THE MOTIVATION FOR OUR ACTION. IN
THE SPRING, WE SHALL HAVE SEVERAL IMPORTANT FOREIGN
POLICY SUBJECTS AND I WOULD HOPE THAT WE COULD MOVE
TOWARD A SITUATION WHERE THESE PROBLEMS COULD BE DEBATED
WITH THE MAJORITY BUT ALSO WITH THE OPPOSITION. THAT IS
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BOTH REFLECTION AND INVITATION.

"I SHOULD LIKE TO END WITH TWO THINGS BECAUSE
THERE IS GOING TO BE MUCH SAID ABOUT THIS ZAIRE AFFAIR.
I SHOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT IT IS THIS YEAR THAT FRANCE IS

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1693

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GOING TO TERMINATE, AS FAR AS IT IS CONCERNED, THE
DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICA. I MYSELF TOOK THE DECISION,
WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF COURSE, TO LEAD TO INDEPENDENCE
THE LAST TERRITORY THAT WE POSSESS IN AFRICA, THE FRENCH
TERRITORY OF THE AFARS AND ISSAS. AT THE END OF THIS
SEMESTER, FRANCE WILL HAVE ENDED, AS FAR AS IT IS
CONCERNED, THE DECOLONIALIZATION OF AFRICA; THIS I SAY
IN REPLY TO THE MALEVOLENT ACCUSATIONS ABOUT FRENCH
NEO-COLONIALIST POLICY.

"AND THEN ANOTHER REMARK -- TO THANK THE CREW OF
OUR PLANES. THE CONCRETE DECISION TO RESPOND TO THE
REQUEST OF MOROCCO AND ZAIRE WAS TAKEN LATE WEDNESDAY
MORNING, OUR FIRST PLANES BEGAN THEIR MOVEMENTS
THURSDAY, THEY WERE IN PLACE FRIDAY MORNING, AND THEY
BEGAN TO ARRIVE AT THEIR DESTINATION ON SATURDAY. THE
COMMUNIQUE FROM THE ELYSEE WAS PUBLISHED AT 4 P.M.
SUNDAY. THERE WAS NO LEAK, NO INDISCRETION. THIS
OPERATION INVOLVED SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE AND I WISH TO
CONGRATULATE THESE MEN FOR THE CAPACITY WHICH THEY HAVE
SHOWN AND FOR THEIR SENSE OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST."

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